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## Governor Announces DNR Permit Backlog Eliminated

### *Air Management Program Achieves Major Goal in Permitting and Streamlining Initiative*

Governor Jim Doyle today announced that the backlog of 342 Title V Air Operating Permits he inherited from the previous administration has been eliminated, signaling a major accomplishment of his "Grow Wisconsin" initiative. The Department of Natural Resources staff responsible for issuing federal air pollution control permits to Wisconsin facilities has also made significant progress on developing a new set of rules intended to streamline the air management program in Wisconsin.

"The elimination of the backlog of hundreds of air permits is a significant achievement demonstrating real and meaningful regulatory reform – without threatening our natural resources or restricting public input," Governor Doyle said. "To continue growing our economy, it is necessary that both the public and all Wisconsin businesses continue to receive timely and consistent review of permit applications."

When Governor Doyle took office in January 2003, he made it a goal to eliminate the permit backlog at the DNR's Bureau of Air Management by December 31, 2004 – a full year earlier than what was predicted by the previous administration. By January 2004, the backlog had been reduced to 148, and by December 30, 2004, the final remaining permit was issued. Additionally, the time frame for water permits – which used to take 110 days – are now approved in a month, and sometimes even more quickly.

"Expediting the permits can be beneficial for both the environment and a healthy business climate," Department of Natural Resources Secretary Scott Hassett said. "Our progress in eliminating the backlog of federal operation permits has allowed us to redirect resources to focus on permit streamlining activities, the backlog of other operation permits, and permit renewals."

One of Governor Doyle's major initiatives under his "Grow Wisconsin" plan has been to create a business friendly regulatory climate while protecting the environment. The Governor's approach to regulatory reform calls for keeping standards high, but making the regulatory process faster and more efficient.

The permit backlog was eliminated mainly through reallocation of resources. DNR staff previously responsible for compliance was given authority to write permits as well.

The ongoing plan for improving and streamlining the permit processes includes:

- Replacing the individually negotiated approach with simplified permits for smaller sources with fewer emissions.

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- Holding additional public hearings on draft rules to implement the expanded use of general permits and to establish registration permits, with the final rules to be developed in early 2005.
- Developing a proposal to expand permit exemptions for smaller sources and providing the legislature with recommendations for developing a consolidated permit process, which combines the functions of operation permits and construction permits, in early 2005.

Additional possibilities include creation of a notification system for businesses that need to file permit applications or renewals, an information technology-based permit system, and an upgrade of program's data management system. Those changes would significantly reduce permit-processing time, improve the consistency of permitting decisions across the state, and increase facilities' knowledge of permit requirements and permit status.